



**STARTING  
WELL 2020**

**A Guide for Teachers**

## Starting Well for Teachers in 2020-21

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## Introduction

Due to the COVID-19-related closure of schools in the spring of 2020, the results of unfinished learning are a key concern of educators nationwide. South Dakota administrators and teachers are currently preparing plans for what a return to classrooms will look like in the 2020-2021 school year.

Planning for the challenges ahead will require new levels of focus on best-practice strategies to provide “just in time” measures for student learning, whether that learning is in the traditional classroom or via remote, hybrid, flipped, blended, or online learning. In preparing for the upcoming school year, teachers should be sure to follow their district’s policies and practices.

## Key questions

The following are key questions for teachers, grade level teams, or content departments to consider when creating a long-term plan:

- How do educators create a plan for student learning that focuses on grade-appropriate skills and standards?
- What are key components to consider for addressing student learning for the fall of 2020 and beyond?
- What other challenges should be included in the long-term plan to address student learning and just in time planning?
- How do teachers communicate learning plans and expected outcomes to all stakeholders (students, colleagues, and families)?

Research compiled within The New Teacher Project *Restarting School Planning for Acceleration in the 2020-2021 School Year* shows **students need to be learning grade-level material rather than reviewing the standards that were missed in the previous year.** When students start school in the fall, **teachers need to continue the education process, rather than remediate.** It is **most effective to teach the missed standards when students need this learning most, through “just in time” scaffolding.**

Resource: The New Teacher Project *Restarting School Planning for Acceleration in the 2020-2021 School Year.* (April 2020) by TNTP, Inc., available at <https://tntp.org/student-experience-toolkit/view/learning-acceleration-guide>

**The guidelines provided on the pages that follow, and the guiding questions, are provided to assist teachers in navigating discussions and planning for next steps.**

## **Aligning and Using Best Practice Instruction**

**For additional guidance: Refer to TNTP document, tips for Adapting Your Scope and Sequence/Pacing Guidance p. 16**

Develop a plan for grade level objectives and outcomes for student learning for the 2020-2021 school year.

- Review your scope and sequence and the calendar for the 2020-2021 academic year and identify where scaffolding may be required for student learning.
- Determine how you will identify and address the skills missed in the previous school year and for your grade level learning for the current year.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What tools and resources will assist you to intentionally plan when to teach standards that were missed in the previous school year along with grade-level requirements? (Example: content standards, unpacked standards, curriculum maps, pacing guides, lesson plans/plan books)
- How will you determine best practice teaching methods to ensure every student has access to grade-level assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement and high expectations?

## **Grade Level and Vertical Alignment Discussions**

- Take time in grade/content level teams to discuss and determine the most important grade level learning, skills, and standards addressed in the last quarter of 2019-2020.
- Determine what standards, knowledge, and skills may need to be scaffolded into instruction through-out the 2020-2021 school year.
- Collaborate with teachers above and below your grade-level.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What protocols will be used to facilitate these discussions?
- How might you discuss important learning and missed standards?
- How might you discuss standards that were missed in the previous school year to have vertical alignment conversations?
- How might you connect to have vertical alignment conversation if teachers are in different school buildings (i.e. middle school to high school transitions)?
- How might you record key learning and takeaways from these conversations?

## **Communicating with Families**

**For additional guidance: Refer to TNTP document, Tips for Communicating with Stakeholder and Tips for Planning Additional At-Home Learning, p.19**

### **Collecting Feedback and Communication with Families**

- Based on feedback and discussions your school has had with families, develop a plan to strengthen communication with your students and their families.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

- What information needs to be communicated with families of your students?
- Does this plan accommodate parents without access to technology?
- Can information be accessed in multiple ways (text, email, social media, websites, et)?
- How does your communication plan and procedures align with the school's plan for communicating with families?
- How and when will you implement this plan for your own students?

## Diagnosing Students

For additional guidance: Refer to TNTP document, *Tips for Diagnosing Unfinished Learning*, p. 8-9, 15

Develop a plan to assess where students are academically when they return for the 2020-2021 school year.

- Determine students' unfinished learning for both prerequisite content knowledge and those prerequisite skills.
- Create a support system for this plan.
- Determine how you will restructure your Scope and Sequence guides and update any district or grade level documentation that might require lesson planning modifications?
- See examples on page 8 for ways to adjust current lessons to include the essential prerequisite skills that students need for unfinished learning gaps.

### Guiding Questions:

- How will you prioritize what to assess?
- What diagnostic tests will you use and how will you ensure an assessment has a purpose?
- How will elementary, middle school, and high school teachers diagnose students differently?
- How will pre and post-tests assist in diagnosis skills and standards gaps?
- How will you use the data from an assessment to support “just in time” scaffolding?

### Assessment Tips and Tools

- **Avoid testing just to test and avoid over testing students.**
- Diagnose your students' understanding of standards.
- Use state provided [interim assessments for English language arts and math](#) or other quality formative assessments.
- Meet students where they are with their understanding of standards.
  - Be sure not to go back too far or to remediate students when it is not needed.
  - Select current grade-level, standards-aligned activities, providing students opportunities to learn standards that may have been unfinished and allowing them to move forward in their current grade-level learning.
  - Resources to find standards aligned materials:  
<https://contentexplorer.smarterbalanced.org/>  
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/tools-for-teachers/>

## Updating Plans and Procedures

- Plan for best practice in content areas, for distance learning and technology platforms.
- Create documents assisting in the scope and sequence of the most essential skills and content knowledge per grade and subject.
- Implement protocols and strategies to diagnose students' unfinished learning and provide just in time support at the start of the year and beyond.

## Guiding Questions

- What technology platforms will be used for distance learning in the future?
- Have you received direction from your district to utilize one platform (Google classrooms, Plan Book, etc.) for continuity between classes for students to access, and for parents to check ongoing assignments?
- Will you be creating tutorials or pdfs with instructions throughout the year to share with staff, students and parents?
- Have you considered implementing an online learning platform into traditional classroom experiences?
- Have you considered how the online learning platform can assist you in transitioning from a traditional to remote learning environment?  
For example, if Google classroom is designated the school-wide platform for distance learning, are you utilizing this platform weekly for students to navigate prior to a remote learning scenario?
- How will you meet the instructional needs of students without internet access at home?
- If you are a K-12 teacher, how will you address student learning with flexible packets for both traditional and online options?
- How will you support your plan and communicate plans to students and families?
- Do you (or the district) have a landing page where students/parents can easily locate all teachers and essential information for each class during the school year for traditional or remote learning scenarios?

- For example:

**Mrs. Jones**

**8th Grade**

[Barb.Jones@k12.sd.us](mailto:Barb.Jones@k12.sd.us)

**Zoom Office Hours: 10-11 a.m. and 2-4 p.m.**

**Zoom Link (Passwords were emailed to parents 4/1/2020)**

**[Weekly Lessons Link](#)**

## Other Class-Related Issues

### Remote Assignments Guiding Questions

- Is there an expectation for the number of distance learning assignments per day for students in elementary, middle and high school?
- What is your (or district) expectation for students completing work in remote settings?
- How will you support this expectation to ensure students are assigned an attainable amount of assignments?
- What parameters are being set for the amount of distance learning and assignments expected per day for students in elementary, middle school and high school?
- Have online courses for dual credit, AP, or college credit been considered in assignments/schedules?
- Is there an expectation of consistency for student coursework?

### Grading Guiding Questions

- What, if any, are the district guidelines on grading? How will you support this expectation?
- How will you communicate your expectations to families?
- What are the guidelines on grading? (Pass/Fail, quarter weighting 50/50, 60/40, 70/3)?
- Have these guidelines been clearly communicated to both students and families for both traditional and remote settings?
- Will students be completing semester exams if a remote learning event occurs?

### Late or Missing Work Guiding Questions

- What, if any, are your, or the district's, guidelines for late or missing work?
- How will you ensure students and families are aware of the guidelines for missing work for traditional or remote learning?
- What are the guidelines for late or missing work?
- Are all teachers using the same guidelines for continuity with students?
- Have you (or the district) shared the expectations for both a traditional or remote setting for late or missing work?

### Building Capacity and Networking Opportunities

- Participate in/or create a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in your district
- Consider leading or attending a book study on current topics in education
- Engage in educational discussions on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, #SDEducators
- Join a listserv in your content area [Department of Education Mailing Lists \(DOE\)](#)
- Attend a professional conference **or** join the organization to network with colleagues
  - [SD Council of Teachers of English \(SDCTE\)](#)
  - [SD Council of Teachers of Mathematics \(SDCTM\)](#)
  - [SD Science Teachers Association \(SDSTA\)](#)
  - [Great Plains Social Studies Council](#)



## Content Areas Scaffolding Tips and Tools

### [General Best Practices from The New Teacher Project](#)

#### Mathematics Scaffolding Tips and Tools

- Search the [Mathematics Best Practices Resources](#) for guidance on scaffolding that focuses on key practices in grade-level content to assist with students learning independently.
- Use the [South Dakota Unpacked Standards](#) and [Mathematics Focus Documents](#) to guide decisions about essential standards/ topics taught in each grade level.
- Determine unfinished learning from the previous grade level.
  - Which of the major clusters and standards within these clusters were not taught in the traditional classroom due to remote learning?
  - Use the [Achieve the Core Coherence Map](#) to determine where these standards best fit in current grade level for “just in time” instruction.
- Diagnose your students' understanding of these standards.
  - Use [Smarter Balanced interim assessments](#) or other quality formative assessments.
  - Meet students where they are with their understanding of standards, be sure not to go back too far or to remediate students when it is not needed.
  - Select current grade-level, standards-aligned tasks that allow for multiple entry points, providing students to learn those standards that may have been unfinished, and allowing them to move forward in their current grade-level learning.
  - Resources to find math standards aligned materials:  
<https://contentexplorer.smarterbalanced.org/>  
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/tools-for-teachers/>

#### English Language Arts Scaffolding Tips and Tools

- Use the [South Dakota Unpacked ELA Standards](#) and [ELA Toolkit Resources](#) to guide decisions about essential standards/ topics taught in each grade level.
- Search the [Literacy Best Practices and Resources](#) for guidance on scaffolding that focuses on key practices in grade-level content to assist with students learning independently.
- Determine unfinished learning from the previous grade level.
  - Which essential skills and standards were not taught in the traditional setting due to remote learning?
  - Where do the standards and skills best fit in current grade level for “just in time” instruction and interventions?
- Diagnose your students' understanding of these standards.
  - Use [Smarter Balanced interim assessments](#) or other quality formative assessments.
  - Meet students where they are with their understanding of standards, be sure not to go back too far or to remediate students when it is not needed.
  - Select current grade-level, standards-aligned tasks that allow for multiple entry points, providing students to learn those standards that may have been unfinished, and allowing them to move forward in their current grade-level learning.
  - Resources to find standards aligned materials:
    - <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/tools-for-teachers/>
    - <https://contentexplorer.smarterbalanced.org/>

### **Social Studies Scaffolding Tips and Tools**

- Use the [South Dakota Social Studies Disaggregated Standards and OSEUS Connections](#) to guide decisions about essential standards/topics taught in each grade level.
- Search the [General Best Practices](#) for guidance on scaffolding that focuses on key practices in grade-level content to assist with students learning independently.
- Meet students where they are with their understanding of standards, be sure not to go back too far or to remediate students when it is not needed.
- Select current grade-level, standards-aligned activities, providing students opportunities to learn standards that may have been unfinished and allowing them to move forward in their current grade-level learning.
- Determine unfinished learning from the previous grade level.
  - Which essential skills and standards were not taught in the traditional setting due to remote learning?
  - Where do the standards and skills best fit in current grade level for “just in time” instruction and interventions?

### **Science Scaffolding Tips and Tools**

- Use the [South Dakota Science Standards](#) and [Science Translations Documents](#) to guide decisions about essential standards/topics taught in each grade level.
- Search the [General Best Practices](#) for guidance on scaffolding that focuses on key practices in grade-level content to assist with students learning independently.
- Meet students where they are with their understanding of standards being sure not to go back too far or to remediate students when it is not needed.
- Select current grade-level, standards-aligned activities, providing students opportunities to learn standards that may have been unfinished and allowing them to move forward in their current grade-level learning.
- Determine unfinished learning from the previous grade level.
  - Which essential skills and standards were not taught in the traditional setting due to remote learning?
  - Where do the standards and skills best fit in current grade level for “just in time” instruction and interventions?